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TRANSACTIONS
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I. — *Shall and Will — An Historical Study*

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I. THE MODAL AUXILIARIES

SHALL and WILL belong to a little group of verbs remarkable for the very great changes both of function and of meaning to which they have been subjected within the historical period of English. As regards function, in the earliest English they were still independent verbs, capable of complete predication either alone or along with the objects or complements common to other verbs. Their meanings, however, were such as to bring them more and more frequently into relation with infinitive complements, until in the end they lost their other uses, and became absolutely dependent on the help of an infinitive to enable them to make any statement whatever. Their parasitism thus rendered complete, they became what we know as modal auxiliaries. They furnish, that is, the formal predication which the tradition of our Indo-European sentence inexorably demands, and, at the same time, they add each its own subjective or modal color to the statement; but the essential notion or content of the predicate is not in them, but resides in the infinitive.

The loss of independent function in these words has led directly and inevitably to loss through atrophy of many or most of the regular inflectional forms which other verbs have, so that all the members of this group are now defective, lacking Imperative, Infinitive, and Participles, as well as

the distinctive form for the third person singular.¹ No one of these verbs has now more than two forms in current use — one for each tense — while some are reduced to a single form for all uses.

The group as now constituted consists of six of these stumps or fragments of verbs, namely, *may*, *can*, *must*, *ought*, *shall*, and *will*. Associated with these were others, like *need* and *dare*, whose title to membership in the group is less distinct because of their continued use in the functions of ordinary verbs as well. And, beyond these, there are still others that assume the modal function now and then, or unauthorizably, as does the verb *want* in rather striking fashion, when used as a synonym of *ought* or *should*.

If we consider the meanings of this little group of words in present usage, we shall find that they are all concerned primarily with the forces which determine or condition human action. And these forces are, in the last analysis, of two sorts only: external, in the guise of necessity, opportunity, and the pressure of foreign wills, on the one hand; and, on the other, the inward springs of action in knowledge, conscious power, and desire. Now, within the historical period, the individual meanings of all these words have drifted fast and far; and the drift, it would seem, is by no means yet at an end. But the total field of meaning covered by the group as a whole is substantially the same now as it was at the time when they first took on their modal functions. Again and again, one of them has crowded another out of its place by appropriating its meaning, as reference to the accompanying chart will show. Sometimes it appears that one has definitely followed the changes of another, moving continuously into the places it has vacated. Nor have the two groups been particular to confine their wanderings each to its own side of the modal field. But apparently they have

¹ This last was wanting even in the earliest English; for all these verbs — save *will* — were preterite forms which had acquired present meaning, yet kept their preterite inflection, in which the third person has the same form as the first. The exception, *will*, was probably an old subjunctive, which likewise does not distinguish between these persons. Cf. Sievers-Cook, *Grammar of Old English*, §§ 417-425 and 428.

not been able to pass the boundary of the field itself without undertaking some entirely different function; as, for example, when *shall* and *will* attempted the function of tense.¹

But the instability of individual meaning here seen seems well-nigh unexampled in any other similar group of words. Its chief cause is, perhaps, to be found in the subjective and impressionistic nature of their content, which, for the most part, eludes comparison with any objective standard, and is thus freer to drift. But a motive for the drift, and a directive force, often exist in the desire to secure a diplomatic softening for unwelcome statements. When a master, for example, avoids the direct imperative by choosing instead some locution which is in form merely permissive, — as when we say, “You may do so and so,” — he has very likely started that locution on a round of changes which will not end until “You may” has come to mean “You must” — a thing which actually happened in the case of the first word on the chart.

In this chart I have endeavored to set forth diagrammatically the chief facts in this astonishing history of change. For each of the six words the story begins on the left with its Old English forms, present and preterite, followed in the next column by its earliest English meaning. For its pivotal meaning at each subsequent stage I have given its synonym in modern English, until presently we reach the word itself in its modern form and modern meanings. At each stage I have attempted to name the specific implication or “color” involved. And finally, since all the synonyms available are carried forward on the stream of this ceaseless flux, and are themselves uncertain, I have had recourse to Latin equivalents, whose values are, for us at least, more stable.

Although our present business is not with this group of words as a whole, but only with two of its members, I have dwelt upon it thus because some knowledge of the features and peculiarities of the group are necessary to a right understanding of the performance of *shall* and *will*.

¹ This stability of the whole in the midst of unceasing movement of its members is doubtless due to the psychological unity and limitation of the group and the strict interrelationship of its members.

SHIFT OF MEANING IN THE GROUP OF MODAL AUXILIARIES

Mōt-Mōste	<i>Permission</i> may ² licet ²	<i>Possibility</i> may potest (feri) ut	<i>Wish</i> may ⁴ utinam	<i>Necessity</i> Must ¹ necesse est	<i>Coercion</i> Must ²
Mæg-Mihte	<i>Physical Ability</i> can possum	<i>Opportunity</i> can, May ¹ licet ¹	<i>Permission</i> May ² licet ²	<i>Suggestion</i> May ³ bonum factum	<i>Wish</i> May ⁴ utinam
Can-Cūðe	<i>Knowledge</i> know scio	<i>Ability thro' Knowledge</i> know how to scio	<i>General Ability</i> Can ¹ possum	<i>Possibility</i> Can ² potest ut	<i>(Permission)</i> (Can ³) (licet)
Āg-Āhte	<i>Ownership</i> own, possess possideo	<i>Trusteeship</i> have in keeping habeo	<i>Indebtedness</i> Owe ¹ debeo	<i>Moral Obligation</i> Ought ² oportet	<i>Propriety</i> Ought ³ decet
Sceal-Sceolde	<i>Pecuniary Obligation</i> owe debeo	<i>Moral Obligation</i> ought, should oportet	<i>Appointment</i> is to, Shall ¹ Fut. Imperative	<i>Prediction</i> Shall, ² 1st pers. Fut. Indicative	<i>Coercion</i> Shall, ³ 2d and 3d pers. faciendum est
Wille-Wolde	<i>Desire</i> wish, want volo, ¹ cupio	<i>Resolve</i> mean to, will ¹ volo ²	<i>Willingness</i> Will ² volo ³	<i>Prediction</i> Will ³ Fut. Indicative	<i>Direction</i> Will ⁴ Fut. Imperative

II. THE TENSES OF GERMANIC SPEECH

In Indo-European speech the earliest group of verb-forms which we can discover is that which we now call the Present tense. But at the start it was not properly a present at all. It was in form the association of the crude verb-stem with symbols of the grammatical persons involved as agents in the action announced. There was in it no intimation whatever of time-aspect. The one form must have served alike for all times, precisely as is the case now in Chinese and in "pidgin-English." In fact, abundant traces of this "timelessness" of the so-called Present survive in English and other European tongues of the present day. Thus: "He goes to the city every day," "We spend next winter in Egypt," "I do as you suggest. The scheme fails. What happens to us then?" "Lo he cometh, and every eye shall see him." In all these and similar examples the verb-form itself affords no clew to the intended connotation of time.

When time-distinctions came to be incorporated into the growing inflection of the verb, we can well understand the priority and importance accorded to that distinction which marked the action as *done*. The future is quite beyond our knowledge. The present is but a zero-point between positive and negative infinities, and eludes our grasp. The past—what has been—alone can be really gripped and authoritatively affirmed. And the past is the firm ground and actual basis of all else that is, or is to be. So in Indo-European inflection, the Preterite is the first to emerge; and in form it is clearly a derivative from the earlier timeless or generic form of which we have been speaking. The Future was of distinctly later origin. Its more archaic forms so strikingly resemble the present subjunctive as to suggest its derivation from that¹—a theory which seems natural and logical as well, since all things future are contingent and hypothetical.

When Preterite and Future had been achieved and installed over their several realms of hitherto undivided time, the only

¹ So W. C. Lawton in the New York *Nation* of Jan. 19, 1911.

thing remaining for the original indeterminate group of forms was to content itself with what was left, and rule the present. So, when language became a matter of conscious reflection and study, and its features were named, that older group was called — rightly enough then — the Present tense. But from the beginning it was not so; and, after the lapse of milleniums, it is not yet absolutely and only a Present, as we have seen.

Now our Germanic stock must have parted from its Indo-European ancestry somewhere in the interval after the emergence of the Preterite and before the emergence of the Future. For it brought with it the Preterite and the so-called Present in essentially the same forms in which they appear in Indo-European; but there is no trace whatever of a Future. The Germanic swarm, that is, brought with it from the parent hive such inflectional apparatus as was already constructed and in actual use; but it did not bring with it that passion for making inflections which played so important a rôle in the speech of other branches of the stock. To this day Preterite and Present are the only inflectional tenses found in Germanic speech.

Under such conditions, it will be readily seen that any statement concerning futurity would be subject to one or other of two risks of misapprehension: If the indeterminate tense were used, the futurity might be left in doubt. Or if the futurity were assured by the use of a modal auxiliary involving futurity, the color or temper of the statement might misrepresent the speaker's intention. True, the number and variety of these auxiliaries might seem to afford abundant opportunity for an exact match of colors. But unfortunately, as we have seen, their colors are constantly shifting — not merely from generation to generation, but from moment to moment, according to the light in which they are shown. And the older values of these words remain current long after the newer ones have been established; so that at any given period each word may have two, three, or even four different meanings in actual use, to increase the risk of misapprehension.

III. A COLORLESS FUTURE

Modal auxiliaries are all very well in their place—for example, when one seeks expression for his feelings or ventures to comment on the personal aspects of matters proposed. But such procedure is not always desirable or safe. For a large range of cases a “colorless” Future is a necessity of cultivated speech—a Future which predicts without further remark. Indeed, the whole history of this matter might be summed up as the age-long attempt of English speech to achieve a colorless statement of futurity: (1) by eliminating uncertainty as to its futurity through gradual withdrawal of the Indeterminate tense from that part of the field, thus making of it a real Present; and (2) by endeavoring to find a modal auxiliary that could be made achromatic. And here, as in optics, the only success so far achieved has been through combination of media of opposite nature and tendency—a combination, that is, of *shall* and *will*.

Some writers have challenged both the need and the desirability of a colorless Future—have even affirmed that “no language should have one.”¹ It is difficult to take such statements seriously. But in language, at least, a need is real if it is really felt. And in this case, that the need is felt would seem abundantly proved by the effort to secure the thing—an effort which seems to grow more eager the nearer we win toward the goal. A colorless Future, let us freely admit, has probably no existence at all in our *thinking*—no more than a colorless Present or a colorless Past. All personal action inevitably wears in our thought the color we ascribe to its origin. Even when we come to operations of nature and to mere impersonal events and happenings, so steeped are we in imagination and poesy that our very speech betrays us. These things also we most easily and naturally speak of not in cold gray, but in the warm colors of life. Clouds threaten, thunder growls, the storm drives or beats upon us, the seas leap up to catch their prey; frost bites or pinches, lightning strikes; or the sun smiles, the ripples laugh,

¹ W. C. Lawton, *loc. cit.*

and the breezes fan us. A colorless Future is no necessity of our *thinking*; but it may become a necessity of the expression of our thought in certain stages of culture, and in certain relations of society which demand suppression in our speech of certain elements which are inevitable in our thinking. But a primitive folk, free, fearless, and simple-minded, as were the English, scorning to deal in evasion and unskilled in diplomatic finesse — such a folk, furnished with the large palette of subjective colors lodged in the modal auxiliaries, with a real Subjunctive and Imperative to boot, might for a long time find these resources amply sufficient for all their needs — might never feel the lack of a colorless Future.

IV. THE MODERN PERIPHRASTIC CONJUGATIONS

But let such a folk find itself in the midst of an advancing culture, with growing complexity of life and of thought; let it be directly confronted, moreover, with the constant presence and influence of a tongue like the Latin, fully equipped with all devices and subtleties of expression — and it is inconceivable that it should go on indefinitely without feeling its lack and without endeavoring to supply it. Inflectional growth, of course, had become impossible. But from King Alfred's time to the present we can trace the continuous process of experiment along periphrastic lines — a process which did not cease at all when it had paralleled the complete tense-system of Latin conjugation, but went right on, working out whatever newer refinements and distinctions seemed desirable. Such, for example, is the remarkable series of progressive verb-forms based on the present participle, carrying the peculiar connotation of the Latin imperfect through all moods and tenses. In such a speech, with such capacities and tendencies, the equivalent of a real future tense was sure to be reached sooner or later. Whether the attempts so far have been satisfactory enough to be stable and final — as, for example, are our new-made perfect tenses and our passive voice — is the question of this paper.

In constructing the immense periphrastic system of modern

English — which is far more extensive than the makers of our grammars ever imagine, because their vision rarely transcends the bounding wall of Latin tradition — its builders were generally fortunate in finding both suitable materials and approved models for their work. The simple infinitive and the two participles, which supply the notional factor in nearly all of these forms, were entirely parallel with Latin forms similarly used. The auxiliaries *have* and *be* were actually identical with the Latin *habeo* and *sum*. In classic Latin *sum* was the auxiliary for the perfect tenses of the passive voice, and *habeo* was well on the way toward becoming the auxiliary for the same tenses of the active. With this great tradition continually before their eyes, and with the usage of their Romance neighbors continually in their ears, there was nothing else for Englishmen to do, when they discovered their need of such things, but to adopt and extend that scheme. Thus were furnished forth our three perfect tenses and our complete passive voice; and the result is stable because the auxiliaries themselves are purely objective and matter-of-fact, containing no subjective elements to act as ferments and change the nature of the compound.

But with the future tense the case was different. If the English had developed a future participle, we doubtless should have followed Latin precedent here also, and have paralleled the whole scheme of Latin periphrastic futures. Or if our verb *to be* had in some magical way acquired a real future tense, a real future for all verbs would have been reached at once by using it as an auxiliary. Or if *weorþan* had shown any capacity for development of meaning along the lines which have furnished the German with a stable future on the basis of the cognate *werden*, *weorþan* would probably have never been lost out of English, and we should have had a future like the German. But all such speculations are idle. None of these ways was open to the makers of our speech. In spite, therefore, of the confusing and distracting colors of the modal auxiliaries, there was nothing to do but to continue their use in speaking of futurity, and to take advantage of such changes as might render them — or

some of them — more direct and less clumsy instruments in that function.

V. THE MAKING OF OUR FUTURE AUXILIARIES

In language such changes come about neither by fiat of creative genius, nor through concerted and purposeful effort to bring them about, nor yet through mere mechanical summation and composition of all the forces that act upon speech — that is, through mere drifting. They are, indeed, the results of countless infinitesimal innovations on the part of individuals, each in the pursuit of his own immediate ends; and it makes no difference whether these innovations are hazarded experiments or sheer blunders. But all these individuals act and speak in a common social and psychological environment; all are struggling with the difficulties and imperfections of a common speech. Here, too, as well as in Darwin's field, there is a natural selection and propagation of those variations which better the adjustment between life and its environment.

The earlier steps in that process of change which has brought our expression of futurity into its present state, have almost the appearance of being a deliberately planned attempt to solve the problem along the line indicated above. The modal auxiliary, it should be remembered, in its normal function does not predict the future at all, but merely states the speaker's present view of the causal relations between contemplated future action and the actor. To make it capable of predicting, the view must be shifted from the causal relations — from the "color" — to assurance of the outcome. And this shift is possible only in the case of an auxiliary whose color is greatly generalized, and therefore unobtrusive. But the modal field has two sides, with colors absolutely opposed — the side of external direction and pressure, and the side of inward initiative and resolve. Between these there can be no reconciliation until the colors themselves fade out. So, if modal auxiliaries were to be put to such use, there should be two of them put in commission, at least

at the start, so that in each case that arose there might be choice of the one whose implication would be least disturbing.

The earlier steps of advance toward a colorless future in English were precisely these which I have sketched in my parable of the supposed case. Let us now take up the facts more in detail.

(1) If we turn to the list of modal auxiliaries on the chart, we see that *must* was inevitably disqualified by reason of its narrow specialization and its intense color of coercion; though the other requirement — assurance of performance — seems sufficiently satisfied. *May*, *can*, and *ought*, on the other hand, fail utterly in assurance, and so are ruled out. *Shall* and *will* alone are left — one from each side of the field.

Shall started in English with (1) the idea of pecuniary obligation or indebtedness — I owe: “Hū mycel scealt þū mīnum hlaford?” (How much owest thou unto my lord?) From this narrow beginning its scope was gradually extended to cover the field (2) of moral obligation in its specific sense of duty or propriety, where modern English instead of *shall* uses the softened subjunctive *should*. Thus in Cædmon Satan asks, “Hwȳ sceal ic æfter his hyldo ƿeowian? . . . Ic mæg wesan god swā hē.” (Why should I serve at his bidding? I can be god as well as he.) From this use *shall* ranges upward through (3) the *shall* of superior authority in commands and laws: “Thou shalt not kill,” “He shall restore fourfold”; to (4) the compulsion of force or of fate, where now for the most part English uses *must*. Hagar driven forth with Ishmael into the wilderness says, “Nū sceal ic in wēstenne witodes ābīdan.” (Now must I in the desert abide my fate.) Its meaning ranges also downward to (5) the *shall* which indicates merely that the action is determined upon, or scheduled to come off: “What shall this man do?” “I shall sail to-morrow”; and forward (6) to that which is considered to be inevitable or certain, and so is vouched for by the speaker: “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.” At this stage it is clear that attention and interest are already shifted from the idea of circumstances which are now conditioning action, to the idea of the future event. The next step,

therefore, is but a short one, which brings us (7) to direct prediction, to which the lurking color of necessity lodged in *shall* gives a certain added positiveness. This is the regular form of prophetic utterance as found in our English Bible: "[The king of Assyria] shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there. . . . By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, saith the Lord."

Here we have reached at last a real future, albeit not yet a colorless one. It is important, moreover, to note that *shall* is here no longer limited to the field of personality in which its course began, and in which it has continued almost to this point. When assurance, or certainty of the outcome, became its chief color or implication, the line between personal and impersonal action was no longer of importance. Indeed, the prophetic *shall* predicts impersonally quite as frequently as personally, or perhaps more so: "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped; . . . And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. . . . And a highway shall be there, and a way; and it shall be called the way of holiness. . . . No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon."

Of these various uses of *shall*, the first, signifying indebtedness, was obsolete in Shakespeare's time. The second, indicating duty or propriety, survived only in the form of *should*. The third — the announcement of authority — has since become limited to legislative forms. The fourth has developed a minatory or promissive function which we shall encounter later. But the other three still live on concurrently and overlappingly, marked by no outward difference of form or construction, distinguished only through inference from the context — a fact which has much to do with the subsequent history of the word. But first we must pause to bring up the shorter history of *will*.

In polar antithesis to *shall*, *will* started with impulse from within, and meant (1) *to desire, to wish*. In this stage it was fully transitive, governing an accusative object of the thing desired: "What wilt thou?"; or an object clause or phrase

indicating the state or the action desired: "Wilt thou be made whole?" "Where wilt thou that we go and prepare—?" "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" But desire may be heightened till it becomes resolve, and *will* then means (2) *to purpose, to intend*: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve"; or it may be lowered to (3) *to be willing, to consent to*: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," "I will; be thou clean." The connotation here, it will be noted, is negative rather than positive. The proposed action encounters no opposition from the person named as agent, and so is in fair way to take place. Exactly as we found in the case of *shall*, when motive and circumstance sink in importance, interest and attention shift to the event. So we come to (4) its use as an auxiliary of future time, but still, like the other, with distinct trace of its modal color, namely, of readiness or likelihood: "Perchance I will be there as soon as you," says Antipholus to Angelo; "I'll warrant him for [from] drowning," says Gonzalo of the boat-swain; "Do so," says Prospero to Ariel, "and after three days I will discharge thee," — *i.e.* shall be ready to.

Of these four meanings the first, I think, has now nearly disappeared from use save in isolated survivals such as, "Have it how you will," or "Call it what you will." But in King James' time all were still current, and the strong color of the earlier meanings operated to keep the color of the later from fading out. But *will* had its impersonal field as well as *shall*, though not developed so early nor so widely. Familiar examples from that time are: "Let come what will, and when it will"; "In the evening ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red; and in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering." This use may have been reached either through the forecast of likelihood, as distinguished from the certainty of *shall*, or through the mythologizing instinct which invests the operations of nature and the allotments of fate with personal attributes.

VI. THE MODAL FUTURE

These two words, originating at opposite poles of thought, have met at last on the common ground of futurity; yet not on equal terms, but each on its own side of a neutral line. Their modal use was by no means abrogated when they took on the temporal function. Indeed, to the present day, the modal function remains in full force alongside of the temporal one, making it still impossible to ignore the discrepant implication which a wrong choice may import into the statement. Thus it was that the first development toward a clearer expression of futurity furnished the English language with *two* futures instead of one—a future with suggestion of outside direction or control, or, at least, of certitude as regards the coming event; and one with the suggestion of willingness, if not of original volition on the part of the agent, or, at least, of likelihood of the event. Between these two futures, perplexed as they now are by adventitious difficulties, we still must, in each case, choose the one least likely to involve us in embarrassment—or else escape, as we are often compelled to do, by taking refuge in some makeshift.

But to the franker, more straightforward speech of the earlier English, the choice was not at all the piece of difficult casuistry which it has since become. The separate colors of *shall* and *will* in this new function were entirely in line with the great tradition of their older service in the modal field. Whatever was regarded as programmed or predestined, was expressed by *shall*. Whatever was to come about through the will or consent of the agent, was expressed by *will*. The choice was simply according to the facts of the case as the speaker viewed it, and there was no “respect of persons”—that is, of grammatical persons. Because of its strict adherence to the modal tradition, I shall call this stage of our dual future the Modal Future. It is the idiom of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and of the English Bible—by no means a perfect linguistic device, but dignified, essentially simple, and fairly stable, as its long continuance shows.

VII. THE DISQUALIFYING OF SHALL

(1) There was not at the start an equal division of the field between the two auxiliaries. In frequency of use, *shall* appears to be distinctly in the lead throughout this stage.¹ It seems likely that its note of impersonal certainty — of mere assurance of the event — was adaptable to larger range of situations than was the stronger personal quality of *will*. It is not always that one can safely vouch for the willingness of another person.

But somewhere within this period the modal *shall* (4), implying inevitability or compulsion of fate, took on the heightened color of personal compulsion or coercion, along with a curious suggestion of the speaker's intent to apply coercion, should it become necessary. This is another *shall* (8) occasionally heard in promises: "You shall have your wish," "He shall not fail for lack of my support." More frequently, perhaps, — but only in cases where the speaker does not mind giving offence, — the word is used to convey an implied threat: "He shall not escape me this time," "You shall do it." This is, of course, the modal *shall*, and not the future auxiliary with which we are now dealing. Yet its very presence in the field of speech, in form identical with that of the other, introduced a disturbing element into the expression of futurity. It made it possible that what was meant for a harmless prediction should be understood as a threat. The result was a reluctance never before felt about using *shall* in certain connections, and a turning to *will* instead, even when the traditional note of coöperation or consent in *will* would seem to bar it altogether: "You will repent this," "The patient will not recover."

A beginning in this direction, the reader will remember, had already been made in the assignment to *will* of all that group of predictions wherein personal will is either not pres-

¹ In the eight hundred citations of these words in the Shakespeare Lexicon, *shall* appears 50 per cent more times than *will*. Though the citation is not exhaustive, it may serve to demonstrate the greater frequency of *shall* in Shakespeare's use.

ent at all or does not affect the outcome. For these cases the original implication of willingness was lowered to mere likelihood. It is really no long or difficult step from "The ship will founder" to "The man will drown" — especially if the only alternative is, "The man *shall* drown." Thus, for this particular group of cases, personal and impersonal, a future practically colorless was reached — was made possible through the fading out of the modal color of *will*.

(2) This was the first blow struck at the dominance of *shall*. The second followed hard upon it, or rather, was in part coincident with it. The affected formalism of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries gave rise to a peculiar finesse in dealing with the second person, leading up to various sophistication of speech wherever that person was concerned. The close, inevitable grapple of *thou* came to be regarded as discourteous and rude. So *thou* was practically banished from cultivated speech throughout Europe. Beyond that outcome, however, in England, this sentimental affectation fell in with and powerfully reënforced the scruple concerning *shall*, until, so far as the second person was concerned, that word was almost entirely banished from use, and *will* everywhere took its place — even to "You will die." A similar scruple, not quite so pronounced, seized upon the third person also, so that "He will die" is the regular form of prognosis for him, too, — though, of course, for cases of extreme obstinacy in either person, *shall* is in reserve to conclude the business, if necessary. Two-thirds of the original field of the *shall*-future was thus lost to its rival, *will*, which thus came to rule five-sixths of the total field of prediction.

So far, whether reasonable or unreasonable, the change has been accomplished; is registered in the accepted canons of speech; and consequently *non est disputandum*. But actual change by no means ended there. "I shall" — sole survivor of the autocratic régime — has found ever increasing difficulty in maintaining himself on his throne. People bred in the dialect of London, Oxford, and Boston still say quite naturally, "I shall"; and those who have laboriously schooled themselves in the literary tradition, in their considered speech say

"I shall" consciously. But outside of these groups the unemphatic "I shall" of simple announcement is, so far as my observation goes, very rarely heard among English-speaking folk. Scotchmen, Irishmen, and Americans generally say frankly, "I will." Distasteful and slovenly as this usage must seem to one brought up in the other, we are forced to confess that the irrationality of it is certainly no greater than that involved in innovations which we have already accepted without question. And on the other side there is the enormous practical advantage of having a single and uniform predictive tense.

(3) For *spoken* English — which is, after all, the only living English — this result would seem to have been actually reached, and almost without a note of protest. For three centuries and more the auxiliary in question has existed in two parallel forms, *will* and *'ll*. The fuller form alone is used in considered speech. In familiar speech the fuller form is used wherever the modal function is at all prominent, receiving more or less stress, according to the degree of prominence. Thus, "*I will* speak" expresses one's determination not to be silenced; "*I will* speak to him" expresses one's willingness to undertake a delicate piece of diplomacy. But the reduced form is atonic (either enclitic or proclitic, according to the position of the phrase-stress) and is used in familiar speech whenever modality is either entirely absent or has become a negligible quantity — that is, when the statement is essentially predictive. I believe that in familiar speech it is so used alike for all three persons, even by people who are careful to say "I shall" in all formal utterances. "*I'll speak* to him" announces what one is about to do. "*We'll see!*" voices blamelessly the same scepticism which our forefathers voiced in "*We shall see!*"¹

¹ There can be little doubt that the use of this atonic *'ll* has been a very potent factor in bringing about the widespread use of *will* as the auxiliary of simple prediction for the first person. Grammarians have so long been in the habit of confining their attention to written or printed forms of speech and to fully pronounced words, as the only real entities in language, that they have been apt to regard as mere vulgarisms beneath their notice all such developments as this which we have been considering. While fighting desperately in front to prevent "I will" from

(4) But beyond all this, *will* has been carrying the war into the very citadel and stronghold of its rival—has even assumed *shall*'s old and central function of directing action. "You will at once proceed . . ." "He will take over the command," and the like are now the regular forms of official orders. It is not at all likely that the refined casuistry of politeness commonly offered in explanation of this and similar facts¹ had anything to do with the matter. The progressive neutralization of *will*, as we have seen, left that word free to be set to new and varied use, as fast as the old devices of modal futurity were found to be inadequate. There seems but little doubt that "You will" of simple prediction—already achieved—was the intermediate step between the volitional "You will" and the directive "You will" of official orders.

VIII. RESULTS AND TENDENCIES

The old-time clear-cut distinction between things which *shall be*, whether ordained by fate, or directed by authority, or merely announced on the programme, on the one hand; and, on the other, things which we *will to do*, was a singularly sound and valuable distinction, which it seems a great pity to lose out of our language or allow to become hopelessly obscured. But of the *shall*-future all save the merest remnant we have entirely lost; and the extension of the *will*-future to take its place has hopelessly confused the originally clear intent of *will* by reason of the mass of discrepant material it has taken over from its neighbor. We have wrecked two admirable modal futures to patch together out of the misfit fragments an unworkable scheme for simple predic-

usurping the place of "I shall" in simple prediction, they have entirely failed to see that their flank was being completely turned by *I'll*, which they had ignored!

It may be interesting to notice that *shall* also had a similar atonic and reduced form, *'se*, after personal pronouns. Its entire loss is but another proof of the downfall of *shall*.

¹ Namely, that, in order to save the subordinate's "face," the superior should avoid all recognized modes of direct command, preferring to imply that the course of action he has determined upon is already—even before its announcement—the thing which the subordinate desires to do!

tion. We shall never succeed in reinstating these words in their former places and functions. Such things never happen in language. But indications are not wanting that the very confusion and perplexity of our present speech are driving us to find something to take their places.

The ideal equipment would seem to be *three* future tenses rather than one — a future of bare prediction, without implication, for all general uses, with a programmed future and a volitional future for special cases. The predictive future is, no doubt, our most urgent present need. Had we had such a tense to start with, we never should have been caught in our present difficulties. Indeed, these difficulties we have seen to be the direct result of our insistence on making modal phrases do duty in the field of time. The *shall*-phrases are mostly discredited. The import of the *will*-phrases is so confused that it is often difficult to be sure just what they mean. It seems not at all impossible that this very confusion may bring about the complete neutralization of *will*, and so furnish us with the auxiliary we are in need of.

Meantime, to take the place of the programmed future vacated by *shall*, careful speakers are everywhere using more and more the infinitive phrase with forms of the verb *to be*: "I am to start at once," "He is to die to-morrow." This idiom is in one respect at least better than the *shall*-phrase ever was — it avoids entirely the unpleasant hint of coercion which lurked in that. Its only fault is that it is not quite compact enough. For the volitional future no equally good substitute as yet appears. Such phrases as "I am ready to," "I am willing to," "I am going to," are too clumsy to use save in a pinch; and, while they are explicit enough, each is too limited in scope to cover the whole field.

A survey of changes like these which we have been considering should suffice to put an end forever to the claim of authority and finality which is everywhere assumed for the present usage of *shall* and *will*. Every one of the phases of their development, save the earliest, still lives on in English speech or literature alongside of the others and in the midst of further change. The end is not yet, nor can we

clearly foresee it; but two tendencies stand out amid the general confusion: a tendency to include all mere prediction under one auxiliary, *will*; and a tendency to clear up the confusion and uncertainty throughout the whole field by using other and unmistakable periphrastic forms for the various modal ideas hitherto included under these words.

IX. SURVEY OF THE PRESENT IDIOM

At the conclusion of a study like this, no attempt to codify and crystallize our present usage into a series of rules for the right ordering of speech will be expected. Nevertheless, some attempt to reach a more complete and discriminating analysis of that usage, especially to discover its real planes of cleavage, may not be amiss.

Expressions in which *shall* and *will*, together with their preterites *should* and *would*, most prominently figure in current speech are of four sorts: (1) Questions and statements involving the modal future. (2) Questions and statements merely predictive. (3) Forms of *oratio obliqua* in which (1) and (2) are reported. (4) Special uses of the preterites *should* and *would*. We shall take these up in the above order.

(1) THE MODAL FUTURE. — It is well, perhaps, to bear in mind that under this head *shall* and *will* are concerned primarily with contemplated *personal* action, and that these words, like the other auxiliaries of mode, are actually in the present tense, and always indicate a present view of things rather than a future outcome. “I shall go” states my present programme. “I will go,” states my present resolve or my willingness. Both programme and resolve are open to revision.

(a) Questions in the modal future have so far almost entirely escaped the changes due to sentiment which have confused the corresponding forms of statement. They preserve to-day all the admirable simplicity and directness of the idiom of Chaucer and Shakespeare. *Shall* asks what is planned for, or expected of, the person indicated. *Will* inquires concerning his purpose or willingness as regards suggested action. The scheme is symmetrical throughout the three persons, save only that since it is idle to ask infor-

mation from another concerning my own state of mind, the question "Will I?" can never rightly occur save in jest or in humorous echo of what some one else has asked. The only point of visible weakening in this consistent scheme is in the second person, where there is a distinct tendency to substitute "*Will* you?" for "*Shall* you?" And the change, though strongly opposed by the purists, causes little or no confusion, since a person is scarcely expected to announce for himself a programme which he is unwilling to execute. Still the two questions are logically different, though they secure identical information.

(b) Till within quite recent times—that is, nearly up to the eighteenth century—statements in the two forms of the modal future were quite as sharply distinguished as are still the two forms of question described above. *Shall* was directive; *will* was consensive, and for all three persons alike. But this consistent scheme has entirely broken down, not only through the attempt to construct out of it the new predictive future, but also through other changes already noted. The *shall*-forms—excepting "I shall"—are generally avoided; and "I shall," unless uttered with distinct emphasis, is no longer modal, but simply predictive. The *will*-forms retain more of their original function. But since there is nothing either in word or in construction to distinguish between the consensive, the predictive, and the directive uses of *will*, the logical intention is often left in doubt. The result is the gradual abandonment of that peculiar combination of modality and futurity which we have called the modal future—which was, after all, only a stepping-stone to a real future—and a turning once more to purely modal devices for the expression of modal ideas. Thus locutions like: "I am to go first," "You have to come last," "He needs to keep away from here," "They must not meddle with this," and even the direct imperative, "Keep to the right-hand road," are eagerly sought out and used, where the elder idiom would unhesitatingly have used *shall*. And in this same category stands the new directive use of *will*. As for the older modal uses of *will*, unequivocal substitutes for them

are in equal demand.¹ Meantime all the manuals and dictionaries continue to print the old scheme, just as if nothing had happened. We look forward with interest to see what the new Oxford Dictionary will have to say when these words are reached.

(2) THE PREDICTIVE FUTURE. — (a) The future of simple prediction is, as we have seen, a recent venture in the history of Teutonic languages. The achievement, so far, in English, certainly leaves very much to be desired. The irrational assemblage of forms from the two modal futures, which at the present moment does duty in that capacity, is a mere make-shift, with no promise of stability or permanence. Like the British Constitution itself, all its elements are the result of choices between two evils, since neither *shall* nor *will* is at all of a temperament naturally disposed toward colorless prediction. Moreover, with the changing aspects of these words the choice has never been either constant or consistent. *Will* is now the accepted auxiliary for simple prediction in all persons save the first, where theoretically *shall* retains its old place *de jure*, but with no sure tenure *de facto*. Under one color or another, *will* is in actual possession of a considerable portion of its field, and is likely enough to secure clear title to the whole, as soon as the “veto of the Lords” can be overcome.

(b) When we come to questions asking for a forecast of futurity, the older usage again persists to a much greater extent than it does in the corresponding statements — the very thing which we found in the case of the two modal futures above. There, however, the older scheme has persisted entire. Here *shall* persists in the first and second persons; *will* has captured only the third. But in the second, *shall* shows unmistakable signs of weakening. And the modal tinge of “Will you?” surely cannot be in itself very objectionable at a time when “You will” is the accepted form of predictive statement. On any grounds of reason, it would often take the subtlest casuistry to determine which should be preferred.

¹ This matter has already been touched upon near the close of the previous section.

The rule given in our grammars for the use of *shall* and *will* in questions is an interesting example of the methods and performance of our grammatical pedants. We are directed to use that auxiliary which is naturally to be expected in the reply, in order that our interlocutor may not be compelled to amend our form of phrase before he can make use of it in his answer. But what are the facts? The matter concerns the first and second persons only, since for the third, question and answer use the same auxiliary. Now the person who asks "Shall I?" would be very much surprised to receive the answer "You shall." Indeed, he would scarcely expect even "You will," but rather some altogether different locution—"If you please," "I wish you would," "I'd rather you would not," etc. So it turns out that *shall* holds its place here, not at all because of any fantastic etiquette regarding the person I am addressing, but only because "Will I?" is simply impossible! In the second person, "Shall you?" does happen to coincide with the answer "I shall"; but here, too, not because of any sentiment, but only because "Shall you?" which was the standard form from the start, has not yet been wholly supplanted by "Will you?" "Will you?" however, is perfectly good English, if that is what is meant.

(3) For reported speech the only rule given, so far as I am aware, is that in the report the auxiliary must be the same as that used in the original utterance—with, of course, whatever shift of tense may be rendered necessary by the tense of the introductory verb. This rule I think the purists really imagine that they observe. And doubtless they do observe it so far as concerns *shall* with the first person, which is their shibboleth. But beyond that, if they should attempt to report according to rule the directive "You will," they would find themselves in most embarrassing perplexity. "The captain says that I will go" would be a rather severe wrench for one who has schooled himself to say, under all circumstances, "I shall." But when different grammatical persons are conjoined in the same utterance, the case becomes simply appalling. Let A say to B, "I shall stay here; you will go on." According to rule, if reported by B, this becomes, "A says

that he shall stay, and that I will go on!" Few surely, even of the purists, have the courage to tempt fate quite so far as that. Most of them, of course, escape by taking refuge in some altogether different locution; as, for example, "I am to go on." But that is not "playing the game." The only case that I know of where the rule can be made to hold out even approximately is in that peculiarly artificial form of report of public speech which one finds in the London newspapers. There everything is in the third person, and the occasional "He should" serves the useful purpose of distinguishing what the speaker predicted concerning himself from what he had to say about others.

So long as *shall* and *will* retained their distinct modal colors, there was every reason why they should not be shifted in reported speech. The rule may have so originated, and have continued in the schools after its purpose was forgotten. But it may have started in the newspaper offices; or it may have been merely the dictum of some pedant who generalized upon the single case before him. But, whatever its origin, it cannot now be made to work, and does not represent the practice of good speakers. Where *shall* and *will* are clearly modal — that is, directive or coercive in the one case and volitional in the other — the original auxiliary may probably without confusion be retained in the report. Yet even here, in the interest of clearness, a translation into some other unmistakable form would often be better. But, unless the form is thus changed, in the report of mere prediction the vast preponderance of usage, I think, would shift the auxiliaries so that the various grammatical persons — not as they were in the original statement, but *as they stand in the report* — are followed by the auxiliaries they would take in *oratio recta*. If this statement were amended by adding the proviso that original "I shall" should be always reported with *shall*, I think it would represent very nearly the practice of the strictest sect.

(4) In Elizabethan English, *shall* and *will* in their modal capacity were continually used in conditional sentences, and in certain temporal and relative clauses, to indicate contingent futurity or contingent willingness. This use, no doubt,

was favored by the loss of inflectional means for distinguishing the Subjunctive from the Indicative. At the present time this use survives only in certain legal forms and in consciously antique diction. Essentially the same function, however, has been continued in present English by *should* and *would*. These words are the regular preterites of *shall* and *will*, and are either Indicative or Subjunctive, according to circumstances.

(a) In their Indicative use they refer, of course, to past time exclusively, and indicate, in the one case, a past schedule or appointment of action, and in the other, a past intention or determination. Examples are: "This was the day when he should sail," *i.e.* was to sail. "In spite of your protests, I would go on," *i.e.* was determined to go on. With reference to the grammatical persons, the usage here is that of the earlier *shall* and *will*; that is, each keeps its modal color unchanged throughout.

(b) Much more frequent, however, than the Indicative is the Subjunctive use of *should* and *would*; and this may always be distinguished from the Indicative by the different implication of time. For, while the preterite Indicative invariably refers to past action or state, the preterite Subjunctive never does so, but invariably refers to the present or to the future. In this point it exactly parallels the Latin imperfect subjunctive.¹ In the conditional (or relative) clause, *should* indicates mere contingency of the event alike for all three persons: "If I should go," "Whoever should think"; while *would* similarly indicates the contingency of willingness or purpose: "If I would consent," "If he would keep still"; thus following strictly the old modal use of *shall* and *will*. In the

¹ This test for determining the mood of a preterite verb I came upon unexpectedly in my studies of many years ago. It seemed to me so obvious that I scarcely believed it could have escaped the notice of the many students of this subject. But I have never found it stated anywhere, nor was it at all known among my learned acquaintance to whom I spoke of it. The test is not at all limited to the auxiliaries of which we have been speaking, but applies to all preterites alike. Thus, in "I had rather," *had* is shown to be subjunctive, and equivalent to Latin *capere*. The matter seems of some little importance, since the test demonstrates the survival in English of considerably more of subjunctive usage than our grammarians are apt to admit.

apodosis, however, *should* states the contingent outcome for the first person only, and *would* the contingent willingness; while for the second and third persons *would* alone appears, except when *should* is used to indicate what would be one's duty in such a case. Thus: "If he should come, all would be well," "If I should do that, I should forfeit all claim to your respect"; but, "If he should come, you should not receive him." It should be remarked, however, that in the conditional clause the auxiliary appears much less frequently than it does in the apodosis, where its presence seems ordinarily sufficient to indicate the hypothetical nature of the whole sentence. Thus, in the examples just above, the conditional clauses in ordinary speech would most commonly run: "If he comes," and "If I did that," where the use of the preterite to speak of a present or future contingency shows that the verb is subjunctive.

(c) Out of this use of *should* and *would* in the conclusion of conditional sentences, there has grown up a very important and very idiomatic use of these words in softened or contingent statements standing alone and apparently independent, but really implying an unstated condition. These are, of course, subjunctives, and follow the rule for the grammatical persons given above. "I should not do that," states abstractly the outcome were the speaker placed in the situation implied. "I would not do that," states his unwillingness so to act in such a case, and incidentally suggests that his hearer would do well to be unwilling also. "I should think so," and "One would think so," both state for different grammatical persons the very same mental result from confronting a supposed state of affairs. In this subjunctive of statement softened or veiled by contingency, *should* generally has taken on the function of the directive *shall*, which has gone into disuse because of its coercive suggestion. When spoken with a slight stress, *should* even keeps alive the memory of *shall* (2), equivalent to *ought*. Thus: "You should stay here; he should go." "I may do that I shall be sorry for," says one of Shakespeare's men. "You have done that you should be sorry for," is the reply. The same use of the preterite subjunctive, as

a means for avoiding the unflinching positiveness of indicative statement, is common among the other modal auxiliaries as well. Thus: "You might fail" is said instead of the blunter "You may fail"; "He could refuse," for "He can refuse," and so on.

X. THE POTENTIAL MODE

Upon *should* and *would*, along with the other modal preterites *might* and *could*, has thus devolved a large part of the task of keeping alive in the English language the tradition of the Subjunctive Mode. A glimpse of this fact is the only intelligible thought which is hidden within our nondescript Potential Mode. But whatever of sense there was in the thought was at once lost in the construction of the "Mode," which hopelessly jumbled together indicatives and subjunctives without the slightest recognition of which was which. In the sentence, "I could do it, but didn't want to," *could* is plain preterite indicative, affirming the possession in past time of ability adequate for the performance. "I could do it, if I wanted to," is equally plain preterite subjunctive, discoursing of what might be either now or in the future. The simple fact is that there are now, as there always have been in English, two modes of statement, and no more—the Indicative and the Subjunctive. Under the analyzing tendency which has been at work now for more than a thousand years, the function of indicating that the statement is contingent or hypothetical has been largely devolved upon separate words, namely, these very auxiliaries. But, like auxiliaries in every language, these words carry all the tokens of mode, tense, and person, which otherwise would attach to the main verbs which they introduce—they are in fact themselves either indicative or subjunctive, and nothing else. But our so-called Potential Mode is a delusion and a snare. Purporting to be a new Mode, distinct from both Indicative and Subjunctive, it is in truth nothing but a hodge-podge of forms from both—or rather, a waste-basket into which pedants have dumped indiscriminately whatever they were too indolent or too ignorant to sort out and set in proper order.